

A
DISCOURSE
OF
SELF-MURDER,
Lately Written, and now Published as a
DISSWASIVE
FROM SO
Horrid and Inglorious a THING.

By E. P.
In a Letter to his Intimate Friend R. F.

A Crime which cannot be acted without a Violation of what seems
the most universal and radicated Law of Nature, Self-Preserva-
tion.

Boyle's Christ. Virt. p. 61, 62,

*Alterius perditio tui sit Cautio.
Nil misero miserius seipsum non miserante.*

L I C E N S ' D, November 24. 1691.

L O N D O N :

Printed for A. and John Churchill, and Sold by John Miller
Bookseller in Sherbourn in Dorsetshire. 1692.

DISCOURSE
OF
SELF-MURDER
IN THE
LIFE OF A MAN
AND HIS WIFE
FROM
THE
HISTORICAL AND LITERARY

In a letter to his intimate friend W. F. By A. P.

...the most universal and important law of Nature. Still, it is not a law which cannot be set aside without a Violation of what Nature

Baptist Church, N. Y., 61, 62.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

L. I. C. H. N. S. D. November 27, 1901.

Printed for A. and John Churchill, and Sold by John Miller
Book-Binder in St. James's Street, London.

THE
DEDICATION

To his Honoured TUTOR,

WILLIAM GOULD, M. D.

Late Fellow of Wadham-Colledge, Oxon.

Honoured Sir,

THE only Relation that drew me to presume of fixing your Name to this Discourse, was that of a Scholar to his Master, when I had formerly the Happines of being under your Inspection, in order to the having Natural Reason ripened and mellowed by some artificial Advancements. The Experience I had then of your Candor, gives me now just Encouragement to hope, that in offering these Papers, which are the first Fruits of my enquiry yet abroad, I presume not amiss. I had thoughts (having indeed brought it to some perfection) of presenting you with another thing, differing from this both in Kind and Language, and by way of gratitude to have repayed it to one whom I esteemed it best due; (from whom I had distill'd on me those kind and gentle Effusions, at my first admission to the University, and therefore have reason to deplore nothing more, than my own voluntary and untimely departure from their warmer Influence) but, Sir, as we breathe here below in a contigent Air, and are not quick-sighted enough to pierce through the Clouds of that Caliginous Night, under which all Futurity lies obscured and concealed, many unsought Accidents may obtrude themselves on us; and when they come, instead of giving us a Diversion, they are then as unwelcome, as before

The Dedication.

Animum
scribendo
lenire,
Erasin.

they were unthought of. And while a Man is detained under the severe Discipline of some dark Providence, there is nothing better to clear up, and soften his Disposition, than mildly to impart to another what is at present so great a Burthen to himself; as when the Stream swells, and threatens the adjoining Bank, it receives a sudden check through the conveyance of some hidden Sluce. But I hope you will not think (most Courteous Mecænas) as I am not so vain to imagine, That this mean Present is sufficient to disengage me from those higher Obligations, whereby I shall ever stand indebted to you. I have only this to beg, that you would Honour me with some part of your good Esteem; and in the mean time accept of these juvenile Productions, as a present Testimony of that Respect which is still owing, till you are gratified with the compleater Issue of a more improved Ability. And while I address to you, if you retain your wonted Candor, (as I have no reason to suspect the contrary) I need not doubt of your Generous Condescension; but am still perswaded to hope, that the bright your great Abilities and Disquisitions have raised you to, is not above the Intranties of a Client, but rather like some fruitful Limb of Nature, you will bend the lower for being well laden. And being thus encouraged, while I study for a clear discharge at my present Post, I shall not forget to approve my self,

Burton near Sherbourn,
Septemb. 28. 1691.

Your Constant Servant,

EZRA PIERCE.

THE

THE Epistle to the READER.

Courteous Reader,

THE following Treatise would gladly entitle it self to thy acceptance. But if the Author may not be so happy in the general, he is sure of some particular friends, and those of no mean rank, who have given it a kind entertainment beyond what was expected, and with whose approbation it comes abroad: And if but one person more be either bettered, or relieved hereby, he thinks himself abundantly recompenced in the enquiry. Be not swift to censure, 'tis a subject very uncommon. And the innocency, the Author hopes, in exposing what is written to the publick, will (withal considering the unpleasantness of the undertaking) prevent in others all thoughts of glory and ambition in the publisher. Besides, 'tis well known, this man is not so discerning as to detect what that mans apprehensions of things are: 'Tis a kind of Sagacity we must confess we all fall short of. The truth is, we are not so much concerned at him, who ends his life in a free and natural course, and in an even pace walks off to the Chambers of the Dead; for why, 'tis the common Road of Mankind; but for a man to break up the door of Nature, and with rude hands to thrust himself out of the world; for a man to hurry himself on all the unknown hazards of Self-violence, yon will say this is a very quaint undertaking.

*Quis talia fando
Temperet à Lachrymis?*

Thrice curst be the fatal instrument that shall ever be necessary to so unfortunate an attempt.

Now what account can be given of an Adventure so preposterous and amazing? There are, 'tis confessed, different Scenes of this kind. Some by their own fast and immoderate walking, are seen to shake the sands of life, and to breed a confusion in their current. Some men, scorn makes desperate; others are sighing, and shortening their hours under the false wheedles of some softer passion. But now for a man that values not the one, and has outlived the follies of the other,

To the Reader.

ther, and is indifferently careful not to charge himself beyond measure; for one that is placed under the handiomeſt circumstances of content imaginable, bleſſed with a competent ſupport, cheared with an acceptable Relation, and wanting nothing but a quiet mind to Crown himſelf in the free Empire of his own Enjoyment, for ſuch a one to become his own dire Executioner, and to be the firſt in hunting away the Sacred breath, this laſt indeed gives me leave to gueſs ſomewhat in a Theory otherwiſe ſo unaccountable.

Bishop
Hopkins.

'Twas the Obſervation of a great man to this effect, Diſcontent is not ſeated in our Wants, but Deſires. There is ſcarce any condition in the world ſo low, but may ſatiſſie our wants; and there is no condition ſo high as can reach our Deſires.

Quod ſatiare poteſt dives Natura miniſtrat.

If we live according to the Law of Nature and Reaſon, we ſhall never be poor; but if we live according to fond opinion and fancy, we ſhall never be rich.

A diſcontented man to me is the wonder of Nature: He would fain conceal his mind, and yet at the ſame time takes the beſt care to expoſe his miſery. I am apt to think, that Melancholy is not the firſt thing that attacks Mankind, but that diſcontent is at once both the Parent and Nurſe of ſo deformed an off-ſpring; and being not able to bear up with that uſual vigor and ſharpneſs, at length tires, and decays through a long fatigue. And all this while the ſubject is ripening apace for ſome deſperate deſign; and no doubt too (as we never want the latent attendance of an evil Geni, *Smith's Sel. Diſc.*) there is ſome active Impreſſor from without that ſets forward the attempt, and having uſed his utmoſt effort, the party is prevailed on at length, and away muſt he be hurried in a ſtream of Self-violence. Hell and horror! a man muſt be ſtrangely wrought on to act thus beyond the common meaſures of Humanity. Reaſon muſt be forrily baſtled; and it can ſcarce be conceived of any, unleſs one lately returned from the Paſtures of *Abdera*, where he has ſucked in madneſs with his very diet. It muſt be ſure when the Brute, extinguishes the Man, and all the calmer notions are betrayed and gone, before he can be brought over to ſo unnatural a compliance, fancy muſt needs run low, and reaſon be retired to its cold harbour, before ſuch a kind of Lethargy can ſeize on the maſs of Being, and a man be forced to exclude himſelf from the friendly Light. Fie! Melancholy to this degree! 'tis beneath the ſcorn of men, and the juſter harmony of a
more

To the Reader.

more settled Imagination. I despise that dull Meteor raised from your earthly self, that impure steam which one bright hour can easily scatter, and having chased away the darker anguish, can command the rising Sun to smile forth a happy day. Well, suppose the worst, the day had been somewhat obscurer than ordinary, and the faint light seemed to vibrate and depart, is there not a warm Interval that over-matches the rougher season? Will it still be Winter? Does not the gay Spring mend up whatever severity went before, recommending it with a more chearful acceptance?

Why should we attempt to remove the Landmarks of Nature, and think to adjust the periods of time according to the measures of our own distracted fancy? Or at least, are we such unskillful Artists, that we can't trim the Lamp, unless we wholly extinguish the Light? Would you persuade the Lutanist to burst the string, because the Instrument is at present out of tune? Must the Jewel perish, because the Case is a little disordered? If a man murders another, the horror of the fact may be somewhat mitigated before his departure into the everlasting Scene of uncertainty, and a gentle recantation may interpose betwixt the censure of the Crime, and the execution of Justice; but for a man to be a Suicide, for that Royal Creature to be the Regicide of himself, and to fall a Sacrifice to the flames of his own revenge, this is a sad revolution indeed. And though 'tis not our part to judge, yet we may have the liberty to fear his future disposal; for he is gone without a Psalm of mercy, and had no *Κόσμος ἰατρικὸς*, to refresh him in his last Agony. When a good man departs the Stage, like the Sun you may trace his glory at his setting, and the mournful Croud surrounding, may be cheared at the brightness of the sinking flash. Happy day! whenever I expire, and it be my good fortune to have pale death sit triumphant on the hollow Cheek, instead of parting in the dumb pomp of confusion, may I beg the boon to go off civilly from the Body; and whoever departs otherwise, I wish that unblest errors may not for ever haunt his trembling shadow.

Farewell.

The

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DISCOURSE

Self-Murder.

SECT. I.

Of the Universal Law of Nature.

Dear Lindamor,



Would not be thought troublesome in the diversion I am now about to give you; however I hope you will so far comply with my request, which I shall take to be a farther testimony of that freedom and civility you have hitherto expressed, as to suffer that to be the entertainment of one of your leisure hours, which has cost me several in the Composition. And first, you

must needs grant me this without controul, That there is something intrinsecal to the rational nature: there are some radical principles that are sweetly tempered with the immortal breath, and do shew themselves forth in this happy Compound, to countermand which, should there come one from the Angelick Order, tho we will be more civil than to pronounce him accursed, yet so far we may safely aver, That we are not bound to believe him.

There is some grand dictate lodged in the Center of the Reason-

ἀνθρώπων
καὶ ζώων.

able Being, which a Heathen called *ἄνθρωπον ἀν*, something that constantly associates with it, and is as 'twere the main artery from whence spring all the lesser branches of the Natural Law. We know not how to Characterise it, but we are sensible enough of the effect. The *Malum fugiendum*, the *Beatusdo quarendo*, and such like, are all of its own l'ying; and having sufficiently warmed, and cherished these Oval Principles, hence 'tis that they appear in the vigor and quickness of a Law. Amongst all the very first, and that which is certainly mingled with humanity, and lies no doubt at the very root and foundation of being, is the desire of preservation in order to happiness. Now this sweet passion, Desire, is seldom without a companion; namely Fear, which is a passion somewhat more violent, according to the apprehensions of the Object, and lies deep in the nature of man; for at the same time that we are in the very fervor and stretch of inclination, there is some kind of quivering, and concernedness, lest we should fall short in the pursuit. This, I say, is a thing very intimate with our Complexions, and flows immediately from the Radical Principle, Preservation: "For every one desires his own Preservation and happiness; and therefore hath a natural dread and "horror of every thing that can destroy his Being, or endanger his "happiness.

Now it can't be denied, but irrationals too do partake of this common property (if I may so speak) with humanity. Every thing in nature struggles for the conservation of its Being, and the promotion of its perfective acquirement. And the smallest crumb of Entity has something of care and self-interest in it. Touch but the honey, which is the life of the labouring Bee, and presently he puts you off with a sting. All Corporeals are seen to fly whatever is destructive to their own forms, and to embrace all the neighbourly and friendly Beings, that will in the least offer to close, and comply with them. Observe the Brutal conduct, though it wants the contrivance of a more substantial judgment, yet it has so much of the *ἡμιάνθρωπος*, which a Philosopher renders *Virtutum Simulachra*; some imperfect draughts of the Moral Nature, whereby they are well enough furnished in their Wilder Politicks to be very tender of their own safety. Shew me a Being, if you can, that would not fain be centering it self in the bosom of happiness, and doing all that is possible to continue, and amplify its existence. And though we can't suppose these Irrationals so unblemished amidst their conversation of sense, as if they dressed themselves by the Glass of a Law; yet they are so faithful to their Inclinations, and careful to preserve the Seal of their Nature

ture unbroken, that they rarely miscarry upon this account. If you regard Inanimates, take a stone that is artificially lodged upon the top of a Tower, and you sha'nt find it inclined to dismount it self (though indeed there is a great deal of reason for it) till it be loosened by some external violence, and then it must of necessity drop towards the Center. This is a thing methinks as improper to conceive, as for a Brute to become a *felo de se*. So that every Being is kind and courteous to it self to this degree, as not to abandon what is essential to its own conservation; but takes all the care, and delight imaginable to carry on its own welfare and complacency.

SECT. II.

Some account of the Natural Law with respect to the present Case.

IN every Rational mind then there is a *νίμῳ γράμματι*, as they call it, a Sacred kind of Manuscript Engraven by the finger of the Deity. 'Twas the Suprem'st Opifex that gave right Reason in Man, its first *Inprimatur*; and an Eternal Contriver that carved it on the fair Table of an Immortal mind. Now for what end shall we imagine there was so much care taken about it? we can't suppose it to be fixed there as an empty Cypher, but rather as some hidden Monitor, which now and then steps up in the name of Authority, and warns men to shun such irregular and undue courses as bear an implacable enmity towards their Natures, and to advise them to embrace such comely Objects, as shall enable the more exalted Power. In a word, 'tis all for advancing the Rational make to the just perfection of its Being. 'Twas by virtue of this, that the great Philosopher came to discern the Immortal Seal that was stamped on his very Being, and at last thoroughly understood by the right trimming and improvement of his Intellectual Lamp, that he must once, as himself confess, be accountable for his Being, and all its operations to his *ἑωυτοῦ*, as he called him.

Aristotle.

This is but a fair and judicious construction of things; for we can't otherwise imagin, but that as this engraved Law was dispensed to every man according to the Oeconomy of Infinite Wisdom; so every violation of this Law is not only prejudicial to the Being of man, but a virtual contempt of the Supreme Legislator; who having all Wisdom, Love and Goodness, contempered in his nature, was moved

hereby to oblige mankind to be studious and provident of its own happiness. So much then as a man revolts from the dictates of right Reason, and is inobsequious to this implanted Law, to so much misery and animadversion does he justly expose himself. And the very rays of Light within, will reflect on him such a discovery, that a Being essentially depending on another, must certainly be responsible to it, and without all question censured for the breach of so clear and excellent a constitution. And as for the Supreme Judge, the measure of his proceedings may be collected from the harmony of his temper, who is so just that he cannot, and so good that he will not inflict his censures beyond the merits of the Crime.

*Impressio
in creata.
Luce in
animam*

Now all this being so far granted, we are yet farther to suppose, that this Natural Light, which all hold to be the glitterings of some uncreated ray on the Immortal Mind, is still making fresh discoveries, but especially recommends that which mostly tends to the safety and conservation of the Rational compound; for this grand affair the first Author designed Right Reason, when he took the primeft and most select part of it, and Enacted it into a Law. And this is so much the aim and tendency of it, that no Created Power can dispense or divert it to any other end. For a Law thus founded, remains irreversible, and none can annul it; but that very Legislative power, who first framed it into Being. A Law that has so Divine an Original, can by no means be dispensed withal, unless by a power equal to the same, or superior to that which made the Sanction. Indeed this Supreme Power, we confess, may, as he thinks fit, alter, but will never totally extinguish the Natural Law. For why, as Divines hold, 'tis that Constitution by which the Heathen world shall be arraigned and censured at the General Audit.

Now this Natural Law of which we are speaking, is of that Universal extent both in respect of time and place, that no person could, or ever can plead an exemption from the strict obligation of it. I desire no better Author than *Cicero* to confirm the truth of this Assertion, — *Legi naturalis nec propagari, nec derogari fas est. — Nec vei à aut per Senatum, aut per populum solvi hæc Lege possumus. — Non erat alia Roma; alia Athenis, alia nunc alia posthæc; sed & omnes gentes, omni tempore, una lex, & sempiterna & immutabilis continebit. — Cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet, & naturam hominis aspernabitur.* Here is a clear and forcible intimation, that no person living can be excused from the dictates of this Law, unless he will suffer himself to be as 'twere banished from his own essence, and live disjointed from humanity it self.

He further says, which is almost convincing thing to all that will contemplate, That this Law is sufficient to carry on great Exploits, were there no other. *Nec si regnante Tarquinio nulla erat scripta Lex de stupris*, &c. 'Suppose there were no positive Law for the present to check the unruly Violence of a *Tarquin*; yet let him consider that 'Virgin-law of Nature, which he hath ravished and deflower'd; 'what beamings of the Eternal Light, enough to revive a modest *Luerotia*, he hath quenched, and so strike a terror into the heart of 'so licentious a Prince.

Now, with respect to the present Instance, were there no such Regal Order as this erected in the Empire of Man, did you spring into being like one of Natures productions, or like some artificial *Automaton*, had been the principle of your own Motion? Or had you come hither in that manner, for maintaining of which, *Plato*, who Philosophizing after a more refined way, rebuked several of his Contemporaries, and almost at that time of day droll'd the *δαλδων* out of the World, as if the Government of it had resided wholly in the Hands of blind Chance; had it been any of these, the Case had been otherwise, and you might haply been at your own disposal. But seeing you are to pay deference to these sacred Engravements within you, seeing you are to bring in a constant Homage, for fear you should be branded with the ill Name of being a Rebel to Nature, you are in no wise to meddle with a Prerogative so far beyond you. Besides, seeing every Man has his own Authority circumscribed according to the Laws of that just Imperium within him, I make no question but that every Opposition carries with it the force of its own Penalty. This appeared in the braver Heathen, who spake in this manner, That when Goodness was an abundant Compensation to itself, the very baseness of such an Action was punishment sufficient. And indeed, who cannot almost but be sensible, that as some good has in it such a native Fairness, such a magnetick Virtue, as most needs, were there no Command, invite and attract the Rational Nature, and infallibly win upon the score of its own Worth; so there is such a horrid Deformity in some Evil, as that Natural Reason must needs loath and abhor it. Inasmuch, were all Laws laid aside, yet there would be some Order springing from the Harmonies of Reason, whereby the Rational Inclination would be disposed, in regard to its own welfare, to twine, and clasp about that Good, and to fly that Evil against which it has conceived so strong a Prejudice. Now, as we are positively assured, That the grand Author of Nature has not fettered, or enslaved the Rational Creature, but rather:

Dr. Tillot-
son.

rather graced it with a competent Enlargement ; so we are equally certain 'tis his mind, that it should so far consent to its own happiness, and to all the means that are required to conserve it, as hastily to shun, and abhor whatever is destructive and prejudicial to its security. And I doubt not to aver from hence, that 'tis according to the Universal Policy of Nature for a Man to regard his own Advantage. For as a Reverend Divine of our own speaks, He is not a wise Man that doth not take care of himself, and his own Concernments, according to that of old *Ennius, Nequicquam sapere sapientem, qui sibi ipsi prodesse non quires.* Such a one hath but an empty Title of Wisdom. And as Self-preservation is the first Principle of Nature ; so care of our Selves, of our own Interest, is the first part of Wisdom. And to be happy, he adds, Is not to be so for a little while, but as long as may be, and if it be possible for ever.

S E C T. III.

The present Case stated and aggravated.

Multos de
Jupiter au-
nos. Persi.

Massageta
omnes 70
An. egressos
interfici-
unt. Et Ty-
bareni (ut
tradit Eu-
seb. L. 1.)
Viros suos
seniores
precipi-
unt.

TH O Self-preservation be a dear Principle, and so entwisted with the Natural Law, that some have taken it for the very Law it self ; yet, may not a Man be forced to do one time, what even natural Instinct abhors at another ? 'Tis true, indeed all Beings, nay, even those in whom only the principles of Sense do preside, are greedy of being amplified and continued. Take one of the tenderest Creatures, in whom are yet but the faint Evidences of Being, and see how it shrugs, and draws in at the engine of Ruin, and in a begging struggle, enough to raise pity in the Executioner, would fain decline its early fate. In like manner don't we observe it to be the common Vote of Mankind, under the Apprehension of parting from the present Acquisition, to beg the kind fate to retreat one moment longer, and not to be so abrupt as to hurry them off in a surprise ? True, but may not the Order be inverted for once ? What shall we think of one that has plung'd himself into the deep horror of Melancholly ? Nothing seems so hateful to him, as the tedious Ceremony of Life ; fain would he be at liberty, glad of an opportunity to file off the thread, and even despairing that the lazy Clue will never be unravel'd to the bottom. Hence we find it to be the Custom of some Countreys, to pluck down the fair Fabrick before the day, and thereby to prevent the ruines of Old Age. And if other hands were wanting in the enterprize, they thought it a courteous

teous act to imploy their own, rather than be tired out with the solemn addresses of decrepid Age.

The *Platonists* approved of Self expedition in such extreme Circumstances as these, and would not Stick to remove themselves, if they could not the thing that interrupted their present beatitude. The *Stoicks*, as little as they would own the sense of misery here, yet concluded Man was under no necessity of living in it. They were oft-times ready to adore that Providential management of things; *quod nemo invitus vivat*, that no one was compell'd to suffer himself to be tortured on the Rack of Life; but there was a sweet relief, which they imagined to arise from the quickness of Self-dispatch, when no assistant besides could be found to raise that cruel siege which had so long battered their patience.

Socrates allowed it under the pangs of an incurable Distemper. Others look'd upon a Precipice, or a River, as the *Servitutis effugia*. Shall we wait the dull Motions of lingring Fate, when these quick Instruments of Release are so near at hand? Won't our Mother Earth, out of all her florid Gayeties, afford one kind draught to distressed Mortals? We therefore find that Ancient Heroes would fain be so secure of a casualty, as to be constantly provided of a Remedy, whatever should happen. The Wife of *Pheroras*, in *Joseph. de Bell. Jud.* kept always a little Box by her, stuffed with such a desperate Preparation, for fear of mischances she said.

*Ad incerta-
fortune
venenum
sub custode
promptum.
Liv.*

Seneca breaks out into a female Commendation, and in equal Fame sounds forth the Courage of *Cato*, and the Constancy of *Lucretia*, gilding over the generous attempt they made on themselves with the Preservation of untainted Honour. 'Tis usual among the *Chinenses* at this day, to condemn the frowns of Fortune, and resel them in this manner; and if there be any one to whom they bear a more than ordinary hate, they count it shame and revenge sufficient to become their own Executioners at his very door.

Alas! will there not be some decent Allowances made for these rugged Contingences, which oft-times affront our Nature, and stop the free current of desire? Will not our Case admit of some Commiseration amidst those dark hazards to which we may be exposed, when the *atrabissi* so much prevails over us? Will it not be better for our quiet and security, to pass into the sweetness of Nothing, than to remain a being torn and dissipated with care and concernment?

The Historian tells us of *Herod* the Great, That in the very midst of his Calamities, his discomfiture by the *Parthians*, his extremity of misfortune, he had this unwelcome Accession to his former Tra-

*Joseph. Ant.
tig. l. 14.
c. 25. mo-
chus.*

gedies,

gedies, which almost went beyond him, that his Mother was well nigh crush'd to Death by the misguidance of her Chariot. The terror of this Casualty, for fear the Enemy too should surprize him during the delay, so much wrought on him, that had not the Standers by prevented it, his Sword had finished that Misery and Life, both at once, which so thwart an Accident seem'd to betray.

Joseph. Ant.
l. 15. c. 3.

Shall we not allow something for the dear regards of a tender Mother, when her Child is ravish'd from her Embraces; when she has been all the while recounting the toils of travel, her fears, and her watchings, her cares in guarding the helpless Plant; her self-touches in the Infant-dolours; her sighing now, and singing to him then, and prompting him onward in the stammering Eloquence of Nature. And yet after all, to have the hopeful Sprout cropt off by a violent Hand; to have the dear Off-spring with bloody Hands massacred before her Eyes, (as was the case of *Alexandra* in reference to the beautiful *Aristobulus*) who can stem the tide of foaming Passion? How could she refrain almost breaking through the Confiners of Nature, to see her self thus bereaved?

Joseph. de
Jud. l. 1.
c. 12.

Again further, When a Man shall be even stung to Death with the horrid Reflections of some dark Enterprize, where Despair and Resolution have been the Van-Couriers of Action, and can no longer endure to be lasht by that austere *Nemesis* within, as the Historian relates of a Robber, who for fear of discovery first Murdered all his Relations, and then concluded the bloody Scene with himself; must not we remit something for the unmerciful Invasion of such sudden Terrors as these?

Joseph. Ant.
l. 15.

So again, When Men are under the dismal Notices of some Tyrannick Rage, which they would gladly avoid, and are begging the courteous Retirement of any solitary Grot to conceal them till the storm is over. As in the case of *Phaselus*, who dreading the Tyranny of *Antigonus*, chus'd rather to dash himself in Liberty, than to fall under the dishonours of an impri oned Life. What can we imagine here? This is what the Historian is pleas'd to call the preferring an honourable Death, before the base Reproaches of an ignominious Life. But then he seems to sense it in this manner, when admiring him for his Valour, concludes for his Honour, that 'twas as great as could be imagin'd in such a desperate Case.

To sum up this *Hypothesis*; Who can span the Dimensions of another Man's thought? Or, what extraordinary Proposals might a Man make to himself in such an adventure? He might be buoyed up for ought we know, with these gallant Speculations, not far different from

A Discourse of Self-Murder.

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from that of an Aspiring *Cleombrotus*, who had not the patience to wait any longer, and to be detain'd in so tedious a Course; but having got some conjectural Knowledge of the invisible Abode, presently made his flight towards it. If you will credit the forenam'd Historian, he says, 'Twas usual with the Professors of Wisdom among the *Indians*, after so many years Proficiency, to commit themselves to the Flames. Their Character is that of just Men; and tho they are said to tolerate this Life for a certain season, as a necessary Office of Nature, tho much against their Inclination; yet do they hasten, tho not urged to it by any Calamity, to unfetter themselves of the Bonds of Mortality, only out of a pure desire of immortal Freedom. And here, which we may most of all admire, when they made known their aim, none strived to divert, or dissuade them from it, but rather in respect to their good Fortune, did salute them a happy farewell with abundance of Commendations to their departed Friends. And thus with the greatest Applause imaginable, esteeming it a kind of Purification, they greedily leapt into the Fire.

*Joseph. de
Bell. Ind.
l. 7. c. 28.*

S E C T. IV.

The present Case unravel'd, and gradually solved.

AND now after all that hath been said hitherto, I fear 'twill be found, that Men of this Temper have been fingering those Bolts which are too weighty for mortal Arm to brandish. I much doubt 'twill appear after stricter search, that it belongs to none to shoot off the Arrows of Life, but he who first fram'd the Quiver; and that whoever makes the attempt before, will be found moving without his Sphere, and meddling with that Prerogative which is the sole Property of some Diviner Power.

'Tis the saying of the Moralist, That three things are intire to *Plut.* an immortal Strength, at which no Man durst offer, *ἀθάνατον, ἀνίκητον, ἀτελεύτητον*, to which we may add, *ἄβυσσος*; and from hence gather what a dangerous Usurpation 'tis for any one to be tampering in the sacred Business of Life; and what a hard Censure does he incur, equal to the Danger in which he has involved himself. What unhandlome Measure has he dealt to himself, in disordering those precious Sands, which none but an invisible Hand can shake? Or in a wastful Effusion of those golden Drops, which 'tis fit for none to pour out, but he who first rais'd the Lamp it self. Indeed it can't

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be denied, but there are many instances given of those that have been their own Extinguishers; some have expired in Anguish, others in Peevishness and Discontent; others out of a fond Opinion of Glory; and therefore have proceeded as Religiously herein, as if they were about to do their Sacrifice. *Vi. Donne* in his *Biathan*, p. 29. which that unhappy Author at another place is pleased to call a devout Violence; and as if he attempted with all the strength of Argument, that a Subject of that Nature is capable of, to encourage Self-homicide; he styles it the sweetness of Dying. And further, to set it forth in all its Solemnity, especially at the Funerals of departed Friends, he proves from Heathen-Instances, how natural 'twas for those times to affect a self-violent Dispatch.

But of all the Inducements whereby Men may be driven on such a fatal hazard, deep Melancholly is a thing of a very odd Complexion, and which looks oftentimes this way. But then, without all doubt, 'tis an Error justly censurable for any Man to let it operate to that degree. And tho a Man were as disordered in his mind, as *Thersites* was in his Body, yet there are unquestionably such means to be used, as will in some measure restore him to a regular frame. And seeing a bodily Disposition has so much influence on the Mind, those noble Counsellors to Nature, that are daily seen to heal the one, may in some remoter sense be said to cure the languors of the other. Now, what should possess Men under such untoward Alienations to accelerate their destiny, and to bid hasty *Atropos* execute her unkind Office, whilst the more active Sister is busily employed in drawing out the slender Thread, is hard to conceive; tho as the common Observation of melancholly Men is, which seems a Paradox at first sight, *Esti mortem timent, tamen plerumque sibi ipsis mortem conciscunt.* Which kind of awkward Expedition, *Burton* in his *Anat. of Mel.* calls the Misery of all Miseries. And the same he observes too to be frequent and familiar to Men under the Convulsions of so loathsome a Distemper. A Distemper that may be called, as the fore-mentioned Author notes, *Hominum Carnificina*; and if there be a Hell upon Earth, 'tis certainly within the Center of a melancholly Mind. I can't but think, a Man in this Case beyond a common *Prometheus*, in whose Bowels swarms of Vultures lodge themselves, and a whole herd of Scorpions continually revel within; and here all his future Sorrow is owing to his present Misconceptions. In precipitating his end, he fondly imagines, that he is passing to a State of Ease. He counts all unpleasantness in his present Condition,

*Vi. Progn.
of Mel.*

*Siculi non
invenerunt
Tyrami
sermentum
maius.*

tion, all Grievs and Discontents will be buried in the black *Enripus* of this Self-contrivance. Therefore the usual Instances in which Men shift themselves on this odd kind of Tryal, are determined to be Sorrow, Fury, Fear, Despair, some internal Anguish and Remorse; which make them esteem the Halter of *Timon*, or the Dagger of *Lucretia*, their best *Asylum*. And thereupon are ready to kiss the Executioner, and to bless the Sacred Engine that appears for their Deliverance. Their Life is a burthen, they curse their Enemies, and murmur at their Friends; scarce any Application that can satisfy, or calm the busy Terror.

Hell and Confusion! In the day-time, how do some dire presages (on which they are most intent, even when they would not be) of Shame, and Anguish, scare and appale the fainting Geni! In the night-time, when they would fain repose, being gazed on by the broken Images of Sleep; how do the bold Ideas, as soon as gentle *Morpheus* has closed the tender Lid, and given a soft *Item* of Slumber, obtrude themselves, and triumph on the Stage of Fancy? How do the Vaults seem fill'd with unusual Screams, thin Sounds, hollow and dismal Groans, and just flashing ope the Lid, shall catch at the trembling Eccho? Where could the Party in this Case shift himself for ease, and court release in any figure? Whither could he fly to be reconciled to himself? To some caved Mountain, and there beg the yielding Roof to redouble his moans; to some soft Stream, and there intreat the busy Noise to divulge his concern, and chant forth his Sorrow as it goes to the pitying Consort of the Air. And now the critical Moment draws on; in this ebb of Extremity, the frightful Shade puts on a pleasing Vizard, and appears to him *sub umbra boni*: And then he chides him for driving on the unhappy day in so tedious a manner, and would fain have the Sun to set at Noon; then 'tis, that he seems to invite and embrace the joyful Shade with all the chear imaginable.—*Sic sic juvant ire sub umbras*. No Objections will work on him, so furiously bent is he. He drives on purposely to overthrow the Chariot, and cares not how the World be scorched, so he becomes a *Phaeton* to himself, and lies crush'd in the silent downfal. To what a strang maze is he driven! His case is hardly reasonable, (as one excellently argues) and therefore cannot fall under any certain Rules and Directions. For they that are under the Power of Melancholly, are seldom fit to take that Counsel, which alone is fit to be given them, and that is, not to believe themselves concerning themselves, but to trust the Judgment of others, rather than their own Apprehensions.

Dr. Tillot. In other Cases, the same Author avers, Every Man knows himself best, but a Melancholly Man is most in the dark as to himself. The cause of his trouble is very much to be pitied, but hard to be removed; unless by chance one may happen to speak somewhat that may hit his humour, and satisfy him for the present; but reason must needs signify very little to those Persons, the Nature of whose Distemper is to turn every thing that can be spoken for their comfort, into Objections against themselves.

A strange Eclipse indeed, and a direful Conclusion must needs attend, when Men will be so industrious in opposing their own Tranquillity! when they had rather take speedy Shelter in the horrors of Night, than to wait the Glances of a more pleasant Day, which may dawn on them, if they will but acquiesce till the Storm is over, and with calm leisure expect the departing Course of so threatening a Tide. But alas, they mind nothing more than a present dispatch, and all reasonable Suggestions are lost in the false Conception of some calmer Season of their own Contrivance. And thereupon with greedy gust they devour the luscious Poppy; and out of a broken thought to obtain, do furiously throw themselves on the hazard.

Certainly there can be no assurance; and how men in this dark Interval can be visited with the sweet gales of hope, is hard to imagine. There may be some busie vapour (and we may guess from whence 'tis exhaled) that may come and pretend to fan on the spirits; but in the end, it proves to be nothing but the filthy steamings of some hideous fume within. And therefore 'tis a nice thought that of Sir Tho. Moor in his *Utopia*, where speaking of a voluntary death, in case life it self prove troublesome, he says that a man may dispatch himself, *bona spe fretus; acerba vitâ velut à carcere se eximat.* But I would fain know, whether a man should not incur the censure of the place, if he knocks off his shackles, and breaks prison against the consent of the Magistrate.

St. Aug. One of the most renowned among the Ancients undertakes to defend a voluntary death no further than 'tis consistent with a good Cause. If a man upon the score of a publick adventure rushes into eminent danger (as in the doubtful circumstance of War) all the dark thoughts of death are shadowed over, 'tis supposed on the account of present magnanimity; and so there can be no such thing as wilful murder, if a man drops in the attempt. If a *Sampson* in revenge to others shall shake the Pillars of the World, and pull the Globe about his ears, the end upon an extraordinary account may somewhat

somewhat alleviate the undertaking. But here is the difference, when a man is under no such temptation, and has nothing offered him as a recompence of some generous exploit; when a man shall leisurely, and studiously contrive his end, and in spite of all perswasion throw himself on the dangerous precipice of self-murder; this is hardly to be excused.

In all History you may scarce meet with such another instance, as that of *Pomponius Atticus*, Tully's dear friend, a most vertuous renowned Senator. who lying a long time incurably sick, as he supposed, thought it more expedient to die, than any longer to live in torment. And thereupon entred on a voluntary famine, and being not moved with all the importunities of his weeping friends, *Qui osculantes obsecrarent ne id, quod natura cogeret, ipse acceleraret*; with a settled resolution, intreated that they would rather approve of his good intent, than in any wise dehort him from it. And being constant, or at least obstinate till the last, he soon dismissed the famished Ghost: *Præesque dorum taciturnâ suâ obstinatione depressu.*

Consonant to this we may easily shape an answer to the question that was once put by an old Comedian, Whether he that gives an Alms to a Beggar does ill, as knowing at the same time, that he does what only tends to an adjournment of his misery. Which Supposition, two of the Ancients, as I am informed, have taken pains to confute, and branded with the odium of a detestable opinion. And no man, I think, need torture himself with the thought of some inextricable difficulty, either in this, or other cases of this nature, especially when he comes to consider upon what foundation he is to rest on; and that he is not to crouch to a Stoical Paradox, or to pay a blind obedience to any Pagan Position, as if he were in defiance of those noble, and more refined Principles, which are so surpassing, and far beyond the weak reflections of that unsound Philosophy. That for the sake of some future good a man may commit a present evil. They that are to be swayed in a different manner from this, and have a more settled basis to rely on, will not think it reasonable to move in so irregular a manner, or to have the sway of their actions carried on by the weight of such an unfair bias.

As for instance, He that will so far set his hand to the Seal of Nature, as to pay a willing obedience to these refined dictates of reason, will not change his Sentiments; and being as 'twere timorous of his Security, as he will distrust the Principle, so he will fear the Practice of Self-destruction in order to future preservation. He will be in doubt what kind of Invasion will follow, when he has thus broken

up the fence of Nature, and exposed himself to such a violent Inroad. Further, he that thinks himself obliged by this Naturality, to render to each particular person, as he expects to be dealt with himself, will upon this consideration, That no person can be nearer to him, than he is to himself, be forced to suspect how he shall be requited, in case he should mis-use himself at present in hope of some future advantage that shall accrue thereby. For he has a greater reason to fear, than one who lately setting aside common honesty has to dread of having returned on himself what afore he so injuriously offered to another. And if a man can't do himself Justice, we can hardly think him in a possibility of doing that to another which he is not capable of performing to himself. If he is out of love with himself, we can hardly think him in charity with the rest of mankind. *Qui sibi nequam, cui bonus?* If a man be naught for himself, 'tis much to be suspected, he will be hardly good for any body else. If to love others, as I love my self, be now the grand prescript a foot; and if the love to my friend be thought fit by the greatest Artist to be copied from this fair original my self; if I abandon self-affection, and have no charity at home, how shall I do to exercise it abroad, and be to others what I am not to my self.

Again further, I have two or three things more to offer. He that destroys himself, besides bursting asunder all the bonds of nature, he quite subverts the end of his being created; which is to live decently under Government, and to pay that honour and submission which is due to respective Authority, without which the present Pavement on which we tread, would look like blood and confusion, and become a meer wild and sanguinary desert. Now if you regard the Magistratic Power in a Kingdom, he that shall thus dispose of himself, must needs be look'd on as a horrid Usurper, and fit to be censured as an Assassine upon this account, Because he invades that Power, which none but the Supreme Magistrate, or his Delegate, is invested withal.

I have heard some say (and again I am informed Casuists are not positive about it) that a condemned Criminal may, and must destroy himself in obedience to the Magistrates command. I'll censure the thing, but I am cautious of meddling with the Authority; and shall only say this, That the more moderate sort of Heathens would never allow that an offender, if death were the case, should execute the sentence on himself; as well knowing that 'twas a dividing him from that natural Right which obliged every man to preserve himself in being, as long as possibly he could.

2. If you regard the Supreme Power over all the Kingdoms of the

*Vid. Dr.
Denn.*

the world, we had need invent names beyond Rebellion, Usurpation, and Disobedience, to paint the Self-murderer in his proper Colours. He is a Rebel to the Grand Author of his Being, whom we must suppose to be the Rector of the Universe, and by virtue of the same, challenges a Propriety over his Subjects, which none durst usurp, or meddle with. Every one almost must needs imagine, that betwixt him and the whole Systeme of Rationals, there is some secret Law or Obligation, as the result of that constant Communion, and intercourse that is betwixt them. Nay, we may not suppose of this great Author himself, that he is so unlimited in his Legislative Authority, as to act above the restraints of a Law; neither may we say that he is absolutely determined to act by a Law; but this we may rather conclude with safety, that the rules whereby he governs the world, are rather the Sacred Decrees of some Diviner Reason, than the arbitrary productions of an absolute will.

Now as all Rationals are bound by that Law which is mingled as 'twere with their very frame, and seated in the Immortal Nature, to render to this Universal Governour the constant tribute of their lives, which seems to be due upon the very nature of the thing, were there no extrinick injunction, and to endeavour all the ways they can to display, and blazon the Glories of their Original; so are they to do it in that manner he has designed, and in which he has declared to accept it. Well then, suppose a person that pretends to never so great fidelity and subjection, and in making Protections how faithful he will be in serving this great Prince at a more exalted Post, shall thereupon break through the confines of the body, hoping to obtain his end; or shall, as in the different case of some heretofore, provoke his execution, being as 'twere elated with the Glories of an affected Martyrdom; I am afraid, as the latter will be argued of a fond rashness, so the former will be look'd on as a bold Intruder, and may be censured as a Rebel, to throng thus into the presence of Majesty before he is called for.

'Tis much to be doubted whether he will not be treated in a rough manner for quitting his present station so unhandisomely; and whether he can bethink himself of any other reward besides that of a deserter. Whoever acts thus indiscreetly, can by no means warrant his future security. Unthinking wretch! whoever thou art, to regard thy Being at no better rate, and to throw it away in a manner as uncertain, as 'tis worthless. If as that Divine Canon assures us, self-murderers are direct enemies to the work of Nature, what satisfaction can they make, who have been razing so noble a Pile? Ah, sense,

*Ex hys
Tis de
Inuicem
as 'Auto
consulda.
Ap. Can.
vid. Ham.
Annot. p.
95. s.*

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senseless mortal! Art thou fitter to determine the periods of time, than that extensive Providence which was awake from everlasting, and had a vast number of Possibilities, stored up in his own unfathomable thought, and might as well have sent thee forth the Sample of some ill-shapen Idea, as have set on thee the kinder Impress of the Rational Species? Art thou wiser than an Infinite Contriver, and more skilful in fixing the Boundaries of Life, than that unerring hand, which drew the several lineaments of being, ere they appeared in the curious proportion we now behold them.

Again 3^{ly}, Suppose a man had no regard to a temporal restraint, and would not think fit to be swayed by any present Authority, is there not something within him, that should prompt him to his future happiness? Is there not in man what's distinct from the massie part, and with whose irresistible suggestion he must needs comply, though at first sight he seems never so loath and unwilling? Reason it self, whatever becomes of the rest, should be all for securing the better part. She is often seen to beg, and prevail. One common notion the dying remain of distorted Nature, one would think should be enough to win, and soften to some compliance.

That a Creature furnished with an Immortal mind should act the part of a Tyrant against himself to that degree, as to course the Sacred Game through all the Mazes of so bloody a Scene. Infamous, and base, beyond repair! It can hardly be reflected on without fainting in the Imagination, and the being bewildred in the Mæander of so dark a thought. A crime so black and dangerous, that the very Heathens have ascribed to it the horrors of a deeper Hell than ordinary. The Poet reckoning up the several apartments belonging to that Infernal Vault, puts the Self-murderer to inhabit the yondermost of all.

*Proxima deinde tenent masti loca qui sibi Lethum
Insontes peperere manu. — Virg.*

And in a feign'd descent brings in one going down thither, and hearing this sorrowful Crew bemoaning their hasty farewel in dismal accent, and begging to regain their former liberty, though it were at the expence of all the hardship and misery the æthereal world could afford.

— *Quam vellent æthere in alto.
Nunc & pauperiem, & duros perferre labores.*

Truly

Truly a man might have well spared the case for the sake of the Jewel. He might have been tender of the Chrystal in regard of the precious Diamond inclosed in it. If I recite to you the Sentiments of the wiser Heathens concerning the Soul, 'tis enough to amaze a man to find how regardless some are of it. And that the Sons of Reason, who are struck with the Divine Ferula, and do sparkle amidst the brighter kindlings of the Cœlestial fire should be more culpable than those Brute Animals who are only swayed by the fury of their own Instinct.

*Indulget communis conditio illis,
Tantum Animas, nobis Animum quoque.*——

That those wild Irrationals, who are seen in their calmer Intervals to chant and rejoyce in the merry Pasture, should enjoy more pleasant hours than some that are of the wiser race, and have both judgment to contrive, and leisure to enjoy. That they who should flourish, and spread themselves into all the fair, and goodly branches of Love and Amity; under whose soft shadow the Immortal mind might gladly acquiesce, should be so suddenly blasted with the frightful streams of Lightning from within, and pass into a frown beyond the Brutal nature. That they should grunt away their time in discontent, and live like that groveling herd, who snuff up, and devour the acorn without ever looking up to the Tree from whence it drops. Certainly these are they that banish reason, and will by no means pay reverence to the Radical Principles within them. Without which, Plato tells us, no man can attain true happiness and contentment, i. e. unless he be careful to walk in the steps of right Reason.

What Sentiments of some Noble thing residing in them had the braver Sect. Inasmuch, 'tis not possible for a man to destroy himself, without drawing on him almost the guilt of *Deicide*, as I may speak. Both the Stoicks and Platonists in a high strain of the Soul's Nobility call it a particle of the Divine Nature, *μὲν δὲ ἡ μὲν τῆς θεῆς*. Others, *ἂν μὲν, ὡς ἰσομοίαν*. They spake of it as if they saw the Impress of the Immortal Godhead on it. And so indeed they might, which I reckon to be the best way to solve these extravagant thoughts. For the Grand Architect in raising these Noble Fabricks, may leave on them the impressions, but not the particles of himself. And 'tis beyond the censure of Metaphysicks, to imagin how the Creator should *ingredi Essentiam Creaturae*. As we can't suppose the vessel, which is the subject of his Power, to be any part of the Potters essence.

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Others call'd it, *συγγενὲς θανάτου*; which in its descent to the *ἄρτην*, or *σπλάχνον*, as they called the body, and there residing a while, became differently impressed, and modified according to the *Idola Speciei*. And whence may we imagin does all that trembling and consternation proceed, but from the foulness of that dismal cavern within? Agreeable to which the *Epicurean* has excellently stated the case, that all perturbations of the mind arise not properly from an outward, but an inward cause. And that all grief and molestation springs from the womb of self-imagination: And happy is that man that has no uncouth apprehensions to ruffle his tranquility; so well entertain'd at home, as to find no frowns, no fowre look from the ghastly Mormo of his own corrupted fancy.

But beyond all, in reference to the Deity and sublimity of the soul, to be admired is that of *Seneca*, who would allow it no less title than that of a God condescending to reside within a mortal frame. *Quid aliud vocas Animam, quam Deum in humano corpore hospitantem.* And what apprehensions ought every man to be under, when he calmly reflects what a noble Guest he constantly entertains within him? He could not think it proper, one would imagin, to storm that habitation by violence, where so great a Being is pleased for some time to lodge himself.

SECT. V.

The present Case summ'd up, with the Opinion of Josephus and Saint Austin.

A Man cannot be his own dispatcher without breaking the Laws both of Nature and Reason, and opposing that Eternal Law, of which the former is an exact Transcript. And we can't but resolve Self-murder into that kind of *malum non prohibitum*, which is certainly an evil in the order of nature before the prohibition of it. Some of the Divine Statutes we find are delivered in a fair Compendium, without any amplification at all, having an injunction which looks like the brevity of an Emperor, with no more than, *Thou shalt not.* Others are recommended in a larger exposition; because, it may be, they are clothed with such circumstances as natural light will hardly discover. Now for Self-murder, had all been silent about it, had there been no positive Laws to fence mankind against the hazards of such a senseless undertaking, there would have been enough in the breasts of

of men to convince them of the unreasonableness of it. 'Tis reported of *Solon*, as wise a Law-maker as he was, he Enacted no Penal Statute against such as should murder their Parents; and his reason was, he thought none would be so desperately inhumane as to attempt it. And in this, the Orator commends his prudence; for fear the very mention of such a villany, as yet unknown, should be an occasion to put men upon the practice of it. *Sapienter fecisse dicitur, cum de eo nihil sanxerit, quod antea commissum non erat, ne non tam prohibere, quam admonere videretur.* Cic.

And we may well hint at the reason, why there is no such prohibition as this in terms, *Thou shalt not kill thy self*, because 'tis not supposed that any one would be so absurd as to make the trial, and put himself upon the guilt of that which is so intimately and unavoidably evil, that it cannot almost but be forbidden, were the Supreme Legistator, and all other Subordinate Authorities in the world besides, absolutely silent about it. There is no instance, no state whatever can justify such an attempt. There is no manner of precedent, though of never so Divine a stamp; that can in any wise abett the Legality of it. And though there be some extraordinary cases, which however do look of a dangerous complexion, yet there is nothing left imitable for us, unless the Morality, if we can find any, wrapt up in them; there is nothing in the world can legitimate that action, which in its own nature is eternally and intrinsically evil: For a Sea-Commander to evade the terror of the Victory, and to shun the slavery of the vanquished, to sink himself forthwith, and to hurry his shattered vessel with all the fainting crew into that insatiable Gulf, is we must confess a desperate, but not a generous exploit: And we may be so far from justifying, that we have little else to do besides lamenting their deplorable state.

Those braver *Romans*, such as *Cato Uticensis*, &c. that durst be severely honest in a most licentious age, and were proposed as great Exemplars of virtue and integrity in other things, cannot be excused in this. To break their confinement through an unnatural violation, they cannot but be argued both of weakness and imprudence at once. And what these little Heroes did in passion and regret, must not be thought to be a Standard for any succeeding people to act by. For all that ever departed this way, must be censured either of a fond impatience, or an ambition which will hardly be vindicated. And who will so far venture on the miscarriage as to expose himself to the imitation of such wild exorbitancies as these, not fit to be meddled with by one, that will wait the results of common Inflict, and

*Sym's Lives
Preserva-
tive.*

frame his temper according to the regular products of the Natural Law ; for a man to shift himself in this manner, is certainly no argument of valour. Will you count him a man of bravery and execution, that first makes the direful experiment on himself ? Will you not rather brand him for a Coward, and adjudg his poor undertaking much like the running from an enemy , when he is seen to sneak out of the world, for fear of the weak attacks of some present calamity in it ? 'Tis far from being consistent with the fulness, and magnanimity of the reasonable composition. Man of all Creatures ought to be most watchful, and prudent in what doth more immediately concern his preservation ; for he is furnished as 'twere with a double life, a Natural, and a Spiritual one ; and upon the miscarriage of the one depends the misery of the other. And indeed by how much the more excellent he may be, if he be saved, so much the more miserable shall he be, if he perish. The measures of his care ought then to be taken from the weightiness of his adventure. And indeed, it must needs argue such a littleness of spirit for any one to quit this present life, out of an apprehension of some threatening difficulties that may attend it, that it can scarce be imagined ever common Reason should be forced under such an ungrateful circumstance. 'Tis an argument, That that man has little or no measure of things, when we see him raging and racking himself under the pressures of a broken fortune, and every moment ready to become his own Assassin. Too visible a manifestation here is of his horrid distrusting that unknown power, who can soon change the tide, and buoy up his sinking state, though languishing away to never so low an ebb, and with new supplies can recruit his necessities, out of the two inexhaustible Exchequers, Clouds and Providence.

'Tis for want of true Valuing what we have, tho never so little, that we are impatient at what we have not, and we are always gaping after the showers of Plenty, without ever minding the sweet and gentle Drops that do continually diffuse themselves on us. A hard Case indeed, That the common Favours of Life should like Rain and Sun-shine appear to us cheap blessings, for which we scarce adore the invisible Bounty, because we daily enjoy them. And then things thwarting with our Tempers, and interfering with our present Inclinations, and every change of Fortune becoming uneasy to us, because we are so to our selves ; down at length we sit shuddering in cold fits of Phlegm and Melancholly, and dye we must out of hand.

Proud drops that we are, never satisfied till we are Oceans. We talk much of being Poor, but I reckon none are really so, except the wealthiest of Men robb'd of the the genuine Treasure of a virtuous contented Mind, the only thing that denominates a Man rich. Alas! we are generally quite mistaken in the notion of Riches; a greedy insatiable Miser is so far from being a rich Man, that you can make no more of him then a poor hungry Slave amidst all his Enjoyments. 'Twas customary with the *Jews* of old in representing and ridiculing a covetous Wretch, for a Company of them to march about, each with his Basket in his hand, acting the part of *Beggars*, and withal mentioning the Person whom they were minded to deride, (as in the Case of *Cessius Florus*, *Jos. Bell. Jud. l. 2.*) whereby they signified to the World, that such a Person was as miserable as the Beggar that had nothing. And if I add ten times more, I think I may have have those of my side to say, I do not err in the Computation.

But not to run too far into this most necessary Digression. Suppose Mens circumstances were something narrow, and their present Fortunes were circumscribed with a closer pressure then ordinary; Poverty, they say, is like a Girdle, who tho it may for a time pinch the Body with an uneasy Tincture, yet 'twill keep the Garments from falling into looseness and disorder. There is a sort of Generosity that is capable of being heightened, and improved by Calamity, which by a patient Toleration will in time pass into an invincible fortitude. Look into the humble Cell, where you may see noble Poverty and Content stand hand in hand, and joyfully saluting all that will enter; where lives one as gay and cheary, as free and unconfin'd, as the very Air in which he breathes. Here is one that retires into the sweetness of himself, and scorns what can threaten his Content. He can smile at yonder Cloud that's ready to launch in Thunder and Storm; He can deride the sullen Attacks of a viler State. Look how unbroken is his Sleep, how serene his Breast, how bright his Day, and glorious as the breaking *East*. But to proceed.

If Discontent be the common Incentive, why Men are provoked to commit that Barbarity on themselves, which even Nature abhors, then there can be no Apology for it. For 'tis a Deformity of our own making; 'tis a Brat of our own hellish Darknes, and so cruel an Off-spring that 'twill devour the very Parent that nurs'd it. For I am apt to think that the greatest Hell is of our own creating; and that this dark State cannot so well be desied by any thing without,

A Discourse of Self-Murder.

as by something within us. And 'tis as great a Torment as can be thought on, to be stung by those fiery Snakes that are bred within the Caverns of a foul Mind. And further, I make no question, those streams of Brimstone, ordered for the damned hereafter, are rather the Exudations of their own corrupt Nature, than any thing else; and they may suffer a greater Torture from themselves, than from any thing that can be externally offered. Hence 'tis, that many are so loath, *in sese descendere*: *Nemo* the Poet concludes; only for fear of being poisoned with those impure Steams that do reek from the black Gulf of themselves.

Out of this fuming fit ariseth all manner of trembling and despair, and like those clammy Vapours springing from the earthy Globe, whose weight not permitting them to rise to any considerable height, do spread themselves about the Circumference of that Body, where they were first generated, and do continually pester it with Thunder and Tempest. Now, 'tis only when we strive to cleanse and garnish those Caves; 'tis only when we do our best to ascend *in mundis*, and to rise as 'twere out of the Dungeon of the Body, that we feel our selves in a clear Air, in a Region every way calm and serene. And then will those black Affections of despair and anguish vanish away, and those clear and bright ones of Love, Joy and Tranquility, break forth in their full strength, and shine in the Glories of their own native Lustre. He that has an ill Conscience, needs no angry Cherub with a flaming Lance. He has an armed Giant already that stands raging and ready to devour. And tho we could suppose never so mild a Season without us, things never so sweet and pacate, yet all would avail nothing, when there is a burning *Vesuvius* continually vomiting out Flames and Horror within. A Man that is of a quiet and even Disposition, and has all things so well shaped within him, as not to be startled at the Limnings of darker Fancy; 'tis he certainly that lives nobly and happily, and constantly enjoys a clear Heaven in the compats of his own mind. When the Sea of this World is most rough and tempestuous about him, he can ride safely at Anchor within the calm Haven of himself; he can look about him, and with an indifferent glance behold either the Smiles, or the Frowns of Fortune.

Now, that this might not be supposed to be a needless step from the present purpose, all that I contend for, is, that no Man of a calm, regular frame, can be driven on so absurd a thing as Self-Murder; an injury to Life and Nature; a thing as loathsome in the thought, as 'tis dreadful in the Execution. If he be, I can allow it no better

Title

Title than that of a sober Studied-madness. And as for that Studious Youngster whom *Scultetus* remembers in his Annals from good Authority, to be found hang'd in his Study, supposed by the direction of his Finger on the sacred Text, to be driven thereto by the terror of the Predestinarian Opinion; were it his own desperate act, the proper Causes of Despair in this case are to be sifted, such as weakness of Spirit, violence of Passion, &c. And 'tis Dr. Taylor's Observation, *κακὸς ψυχὸς μακρόθυμος*; where there is a littleness of Heart, there is also a defect of Hope, and an extreme forwardness to Sorrow and Suspicion.

faciem haberet in Sacrum Bibliorum codicem obversam, ac digitum porrectum lorum Sacra Scriptura designantem ult. de predestinatione tractabatur, Scult. An. Dec. 2. p. 87.

Certainly they were no other than Heathens, that were so far from thinking it unlawful, that in some Cases, as that of Country, Friends, bodily Pressure, &c. they held it to be their Duty to kill themselves. And how they could be justified in the attempt, tho they had no other Philosophy but that of Nature to direct them, we can't find; for in that the Wiser among them did oppose all Violence of this kind, and were often disputing, that 'twas but a poor Specimen of Valour, if they could not encounter a little trouble; and that we were placed in this world as Soldiers by their General, each man at his Post, and none to move without order; and that self-violence was a breach not only to our own persons, but the Kingdom, or Commonwealth of which we were members. In that the Sagest amongst them pleaded in this manner, 'twas enough to baffle all their pretences, to silence all that ever had a mind to plead for it, and to argue them of extreme weakness and inconsideration in the fact.

And now we are to imagine that such deficiencies as these will be so far from being justifiable, that right Reason will never be put to father all those pitiful abortions that do spring from the womb of passion and mistake. And think if a man has the judgment to determine about the Contingencies of this present life; he need not terrify himself so much about the expectation of another; for in reference to the forementioned Principle, I hope ever to acquiesce in his determination, who speaks to this effect; He that after due search finds not the marks of a Reprobate about him, has no grounds to suspect the power of any latent decree to make him one. And therefore 'tis an argument of a strange kind of shortness and incontinency, for any man to miscarry upon that account, and sit only to be imputed to the sickleness of misguided youth.

Josephus.

Bell. Jud.

L. 3. C. 14.

Also L. 7.

C. 18. in

the Siege

of Massada.

Josephus, who devised a way that Men should rather kill one another by Lot, if occasion were, than become Murderers of themselves, which he calls a bloody Work, and says, That they who wrought it, were such as did not permit Reason to take place. He in a Philosophick Discourse to his Countrymen, so much over-mastered by the Roman Puissance, endeavours to prove that he who strives against an Adversary, whom he has all the reason in the world to imagine he shall fall before, is little else than a Self-murderer: And from hence 'tis that he so passionately proceeds to intreat his friends to a peaceable surrender. Why should we become Murderers of our selves, O ye my friends, what Cowards shall we shew our selves to be? Of what absurdity and indiscretion shall we be found guilty? How much shall we violate the Law of Nature? What a dreadful Crime shall we commit against the Author of our Being? How manifestly shall we contemn hereby his power, and command over us? How can he do otherwise than justly consign us over to some dark abode, as the punishment annexed to so black a crime. And hence he concludes too, that there is a darker reserve than ordinary for the soul of the Selfmurderer. Τὴν μὲν ἀνδρὸς δέχεται τὰς ψυχὰς οὐκ ὁπίσσω. Jo. And if death in its most leisurable advance looks formidable enough, sudden death much more, because it comes to us in the shape of horror and surprize. But of all kinds of death a self-violent one must needs be as the most unsafe to a mans self, so the most uncomfortable to any surviving Relation; for as doubts may arise of the fairness of such a ones valediction to this world, so there may be a greater concern at his being fit for the entertainment of a better.

A man cannot act against himself in so base and felonious a manner without highly prejudicing his Immortal part, and interrupting his eternal tranquillity. For according to the terms on which we now all stand, impenitence and irremission are such, as the former must needs suppose the latter. And how a man can be said to preperent of a dangerous fact, which he is presently entring upon, and by means of which he is precluded from all future hopes, and opportunities in order to such an effect, must be left to a deeper enquiry, than I am at present able to make. Certainly, if there be any thing of pardon *ante factum*, it must be supposed to be by grant of dispensation; which includes both an allowance of the fact, and also an exemption from punishment; which would be a horrid thing for any man to suppose in the present Case. Hence it is that the most candid Casuist can hardly find in it a capacity of being pardoned. And according to Ecclesiastick Censure, the party we know is supposed to be

be *ipso facto* Excommunicate. And therefore it was that St. *Austin* left it so strictly in caution, that no-one should dare to dispatch himself, though to never so good a purpose, even the getting free from any present inconvenience, lest he should be mistaken in his aim, and from thinking to make his condition better, render it infinitely and unspeakably worse. *Neminem spontaneam mortem sibi inferre debere velut fugiendo molestias temporales, ne incidat in aternas. Aug. de Civit. Dei.* And again, he is so far from questioning, that he is very positive in it, that a better life is not designed for those that have so much abused themselves in this: *Reos suae mortis melior post mortem vita non suscipit. Aug.* And when he came to chide some of his Co-temporaries, for being over-favourable to the memories of such as had made themselves away upon a Religious account, says he, Let their pretence be what 'twill, my Conclusion is, That as they never deserved, so they shall never be honoured with the name of Martyrs. *Qui sibi collum ligaverunt nomine Martyrum nunquam veneramur.*

There is a saying of *Pythagoras* in *Cicero*, of excellent importance in the present matter, That for a man to depart hence in a violent manner, is as if a Soldier should march off without the word of the Commander. And what a sorry expectation is it for one that has voluntarily resigned up his Right, to be summoned again to receive the wages of a Rebel? *Injussu Imperatoris de praesidio, & statione vitae discedere.* 'Tis an audacious thing to imagine, We are at our own disposal, and can execute our selves when we will: No more than a private person can take a Malefactor from the Bar, and put him to death upon his own private authority. In this case we are to suppose a man to be both his own Judge and Jaylor; and in the first place, how a man can be thought a competent Judge in his own Cause; and in the second, what authority can he exercise over himself, when there is no superior Law whereon to build his determination, is difficult to find out. *Nemo habet in se Auctoritatem, cum non sit seipso superior.* Further I confess, I am not old enough to conceive how self-violence, as in the preservation of some virtue or other, should assume the title of Martyrdom. The cause may be good 'tis true, which indeed constitutes the Martyr, but how good that cause must be which justifies an ill act, I can't well determine; and should be very cautious to celebrate for Martyrdom, what we can make little else than plain murder. The case of *Pelagia* is rather to be pitied than commended. Though that tender Creature did it undoubtedly to miss those unhandsome Violations to which she saw her self exposed. And 'tis pity, methinks, that the blushes of so Divine a modesty should

wholly disappear by such a hasty indiscreet management of her self. The most that St. *Ambrose* spake of it, when his Sister *Marcellina* consulted him directly to give in his thoughts about this matter, was, He believed, that might not be reputed as an offence, which was made use of as a remedy. But it must be a desperate distemper indeed to admit of so dangerous an application. And *Baronius* was so perplexed about it, that he e'ne concluded, *Quid ad hæc dicamus, non habemus.* Amongst all, one would rather chuse to rest in St. *Austin's* *nullo modo*; upon no account, whether it be the removing any present, or the preventing any future evil, or the gratifying some fleshly desire to be in the next life, can it be lawful for any man to do violence to himself. In reference to this last it was, that he gave his opinion of *Cleombrotus*, when seeming to applaud his Courage, concluded of his attempt, that 'twas done rather *magnè* than *benè*. And here I cannot but remark that of *Seneca*, *Irascere Interfectori, sed miserere Interfecti.* And further, to the former instance of *Pelagia*, having had occasion to mention that innocent delightful part of mankind, give me leave to represent the matter in some Diviner feature, and you have in the *Apocrypha* an account of a Woman that in excess of sorrow thought of making her self away, but the only thing that restrained her, was the tender regard she bore to her aged Parent. She was very sorrowful, 'tis said, so that she thought to have strangled her self, and she said, I am the only daughter of my father, and if I do this thing, it will be a reproach to him, and I shall bring his old age with sorrow to the grave.

Tob 3. 10.

The CONCLUSION.

AND now to draw towards an end: Alas! when your lost friend, *Lindamor*, shall recur to your Nightly fancy, and you shall have reacted to your waking Geni his unfortunate transition from this life to the immense space of another, Ah Melancholly thought, to suppose that he is now sighing way an Eternity in tears as the just amercement of so horrid a Crime! 'Tis a torment indeed to see happiness at a distance with hopeless eyes never to enjoy it. Can you refrain folding up your self in all the forms of sorrow? To what a strange fetch must a man be driven in such a case?

— *Amisum Socium longo sermone.*

What would you give to retrieve his wandering shade? O the curse that lies on those rude hands that were so impiously imbrowed! the censure he has incurred for drawing on himself the guilt of his own blood!

blood! Were I to imagine such a thing to be the hasty product of unkind despair, I would curse with fury and concern, those unpolished atoms that should juggle together in so unhappy a Collision. And were it my case that I had a friend so determining, I would beg the Powers above, that can never forget, only to raze such an action out of the Annals of time, and suffer it rather to remain a blot, than any discernable note in the Calender of Eternity.

Oh! That Nature's Garment should sit uneasie about any one, as not to tarry the leisure of some Angel to undress him, but violently to strip off the robe of Nature! How does a man by such an action not only baffle the hopes of his surviving friends, but also balk the Courtessie of his Invisible Minister, who would gladly himself have drawn the Curtain, removed the Light, and bid him a gentle repose.

Further, what hard thoughts will the world be apt to entertain concerning the conduct of such a man's Reason and Understanding? how illy he has improved that Divine Light, and almost quenched the Celestial Spangle! Was he furnished with an Intellect, and had a Glorious Lamp of Knowledg set up, to shine in it for no better purpose! they will rather censure it by the use that is made of it, to be some loose spark flying out of the Lake of fire, than ever suppose it to be the kindlings of a Diviner flame. Better certainly, in my thought, had such a one never been, or being, had been long since banished from his own essence, and commencing some other kind, had passed into an innocent Animal, that was never like to have the burthen of an after-thought to gall and perplex him! That man who is only capable here of those higher accessions of thought and study, should not better consider what a noble thing 'tis to live! Life, we are to be assured, is the highest perfection of Corporeal Beings, because the nearest resemblance of the Divine. The most contemptible Creature in whom the Springs of Life are in motion, can boast of a preeminence beyond the Stars; and the minutest part of an Organiz'd Being, and enliven'd, may challenge the Sun, and bid defiance to its Inanimate luster. But alas! 'tis not barely to live, that we plead for: If so, the vilest of Brute Animals may well rank themselves with the highest Sons of Reason. But when Life it self shall be adorned and glorified with all those Excellencies and Advantages, to render it ease and delightful, that can be named, this is that which raiseth it beyond a common breathing. And all men I reckon might live happy, if they would themselves; if they would be steady in their desires, and equal in their apprehensions of things present. They might have then saved wise *Democritus* the trouble of exchanging his Passion,

*Intellectus
humanus,
Luxurians
Kvelu.*

who though 'twas his constant business to laugh, yet having once lighted on a man of an indifferent temper like himself, could not forbear dropping a tear, for that the number of such men was so small.

Indifferency, we confess, is a flower that grows not in every Garden; where we shall meet with one that is calm, easy and delectable under every circumstance, and event of things, we shall be pestered with a hundred that are nothing but storm and noise; and if any thing crosses their desires, they think it their only remedy to rage and boil away in the fury of some base extreme. And truly I can't think it any other, but for want of studying the Golden Rule of Equality, that most men are as miserable in the defeat of their expectations, as before they were eager in the pursuit of their desires. Of all men of his Rank, *Seneca* came at length to be mostly admired for a man of a patient, even temper, who in every interfering juncture found more pleasure and contentment in his own quiet apprehension of things, than he did trouble and uneasiness in their discomposure. And *Cicero* was as noble in his Sentiment; as *Seneca* was now grown discreet in his behaviour, when he was asked, How a man should become Rich? answered, To be poor in Desires. And he that is otherwise, and has neither the measure, nor the manners to respect a little, I wish him no worse, with that pious Elder in his Treatise of Contentation, but that he were plagued sufficiently with an Abundance.

Dr. Hall.

Alas! what meanness of Spirit does this argue? a man of a sour, implacable discontented temper, is so far from being Christianly great and generous, that I much question whether he has not disgraced the very Heathen within him. True virtue is certainly the fairest Criterion whereby to discern a man truly great; and as an Honourable Person whose name will for ever flourish in the Commonwealth of Learning, has lately shewn, That is Magnanimity indeed, where Religion and Virtue are the Commanders of humane action. *Boyle's* Christ. Virt. 'Tis only in a Religious breast where Indifferency, and Moderation do reside; that the Natural Symphony which *Plato* fancied by his τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἀνθρώπινον, is in consort, By means of which he talked so much of Mental Musick, tuning of Passions, and the Harmonies of a virtuous mind. Such Virtues as these are the only Instruments of Enthroning Man's deposed Reason, and re-establishing within him a just Empire over all those disorderly Passions, which so impetuously rend a man from the free possession and enjoyment of himself. Now besides the want of this, here is one thing to which

which a great part of mans misery is owing. Men are often seen to terrifie themselves with what may be, and to erect Schemes of futurity in the Shop of their amazed fancy. They would fain be spelling out their future state, when 'twould make abundantly more for their happiness and tranquillity in *diem vivere*, and to entertain their present fortune with all imaginable ease and freedom.

Nescia mens hominum facti, sortisq; futura.

Hereby they raise to themselves Ideas, much like the imaginary guesses of some imposing Astrologer, who threatens you with Thunder and Lightning enough to dare the stout st Hector, and put him to his shifts to fly away in horror and sadness, when in the issue the air proves mild and temperate; they possess themselves with the dread of a sad, discontented day approaching, which will even weep out its eyes. But when 'tis born, it proves a *Democritus*, and does nothing but laugh at the foolery of their extravagant prepossessions.

Another thing which renders us in a great degree miserable is this: We are extremely busie in prosecuting our fond desires, and are oftentimes deceived by our overmuch confidence in the enjoyment. Like silly Children we think the Sky lies on yonder hill, which we either lose in the prosecution, or find vastly removed from our eager prospect. The temper of most men is never to be satisfied till they are got up to the height of enjoyment; and 'tis a great hazard but they then find themselves far more uneasy than they were before, and would fain, if possible, be restored to their former point, and wish they had never tasted the enjoyment. They are fit to be resembled to that King in *Josephus*, who being disturbed by his enemies and accusers in the possession of the Throne, came to *Cesar*, and told him, He had the Substance, but now craved the shadow of the Kingdom.

And here too, even in this we shall meet with great variety of Humours; some love to be great and popular, others to be gay and reserved. When as an *Alexander* grows big with Empire, and groans for more worlds to conquer, a *Dioclesian* gladly retires from his Throne and Angustness, to a Rural Farm, as from a state of Misery and Servitude, to that of freedom and repose. Some men chuse rather to live a private life, wherein is security, than in the height of fortune and honour, with perpetual danger and disquiet. But now here is the most pinching and tremendous consideration of all, that after a man has been variously exercised, and shifted from this side to that, he shall for want of an Executioner become his own; a
man

man in this case is divided, and at enmity against himself, and in a strange kind of manner becomes both the active and passive subject of his own action. 'Tis said of *Pythagoras*, that he cursed the number Two, because 'twas the first that presumed to depart from Unity. Now 'tis by Unity that things are preserved, and Individuals are principally one; and therefore if Individuals be divided against themselves, and things cease to be true and amicably disposed towards themselves, there is no other to be expected, desolation must needs ensue, the world it self can't stand. 'Tis strange that any one should be so hideously cruel to himself, beyond all exceptions of pity and compassion: Indeed, to render the whole circuit of *Autophony* the more conspicuous, I can't think that any man should absolutely desire to be miserable or wretched in his last existence. But the thing is, upon some distaste he affects the dissolution of his present, and personal subsistence, upon intention and hope by such a change to be bettered in his future condition. And therefore for the present he is, as 'twere, at odds with himself; and like two intimate persons, the nearer is their affection, the greater is their distance when they fall into division, and the likelier to continue if there be no Reconciler; his condition is much the more desperate, because the difference rises high, and there wants a Mediator of Reconciliation betwixt a man and himself. But it must be a desperate attack indeed, when a man shall precipitate himself on so dangerous a hazard as we are now mentioning; to separate himself so preposterously, and in the separation to send one part of himself, to inherit no more mercy than we can suppose to hover *inter pontem, & fontem*; the other to be exposed like the in-terment of some viler Creature, and to be denied the decencies of a common obsequy. Nay moreover, whose very goods are adjudged execrable hereby, i. e. as to men. And therefore do from that very instant become a *Deodand*, as returning to their principal owner.

Indeed there are some cases (as I am well informed) in which the Law universally allows an orderly Sepulture, such as deep Melancholy, or an extraordinary *Delirium*. And we have an account out of an ancient Author of two Melancholy Brethren that murdered themselves, and for so foul an act were condemned to an infamous Burial; but when upon further examination it appeared that misery and madness were the Incentives, the Sentence was revoked, and the deceased honoured with a due solemnity. This seems very tolerable, and agreeing with humane Prudence to mitigate these hard Censures; for when men are sad beyond measure, and are harassed by the violence of a long distemper, they oft-times suffer under a frightful
wreck

wreck of Reason; and then like a Ship without a Pilot, they must needs split on the next Rock. But this is so rarely proved, and so seldom regarded, that most men to shew the malignity of so detestable a fact, are for exposing the Criminal to an Exemplary disgrace. And therefore as among the *Romans* they had their *Porta Scelerata*, through which the Bodies of the Dead were dragg'd; so now the manner is to convey them to a separate place, and there stake down the trembling Corps reeking in its own gore and filth, as a publick horror to all that shall pass that way. Other Laws determined, that one hand should be left unburied. And 'twas a Statute made by *Tarquin*, that their whole Bodies should be hung up in the air.

*Athenienses
abscissam
manum
'Αυτοχαι-
εος inhu-*

manum relinquabant. Tarquin. Præsum cadavera crucibus fagebat, civibus spectanda, & feris volucibus laetanda.

Josephus tells us, 'Twas anciently determined among the *Jews*, that though they generally held it lawful to bury their Enemies, yet they resolved 'twas not fit the body of the Self-murderer should be Interr'd till the going down of the Sun. And 'twas Customary with other Nations, he tells us farther, to cut off their right hands, judging that as the Soul hereby was made a stranger to the Body, so by that fact the hand was as 'twere a stranger to both. *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. Lib. 3. Cap. 14.*

The shame and ignominy then to which they generally exposed such a one, does sufficiently testify their judgment of so notorious a fact. And indeed considering the Obligations the Self-murderer breaks through, the quality of the fact, &c. how can we suppose them to be less rigorous in making their resentment of it as Exemplary as may be? Here is an irreparable breach made in humane Society; here is an unnatural violation of the Law of Self-charity; (when we can't otherwise suppose but that this is a thing which ought first to begin at our selves, and that we are under higher obligations to preserve our own lives, than the lives of others; and more obliged not to deface that Divine Image upon our selves, than upon any other of mankind.) Here is an abuse of that Right of Nature, which is defined to be a liberty that each man hath to use his power, not in order to his destruction, but the contrary. For this were really to infringe the Law of Nature and Reason, to the breach of which no Rational man will ever pretend to any right. And if once broken, whether out of error, passion, or surprise, nothing can be pleaded in justification or excuse; for this seems a very plausible determination, that seeing Self-preservation is the great Law of Nature and

*See Shaftes-
ro's Great
Law of
Nature a-
gainst
Hobbs.*

Reason

See more
of this in
Shaf. 2a

Reason, as we have intimated above, to act that which is really and truly contrary to this Law, must needs be a breach thereof, though the man so acting may be so far in an error, as not to think the action to be so destructive to the end he aims at, as 'tis; for as in Civil Government, ignorance of the Law is no good Plea to excuse, and justify, though it may extenuate a crime in some cases; so in *Natural* *Nature*, error, ignorance, or passion, cannot excuse and justify those actions which are really contrary to right Reason, or that Grand principle of Self-preservation.

And now, *Lindamor*, I am afraid that in dissuading others from doing violence to themselves, I have offered some to your patience in the tediousness of so large a Letter. I have only at present to add the readiness I am in to serve you; and to put you in mind of the Obligation, that you need not doubt of having that respect shewn you, which you might at all times so freely command from

Your Obligated Friend and Servant,

EZRA PIERCE

F I N I S